

Human Rights Commission Meeting
February 20, 2014, 6:30-8:30 pm, Bangs Community Center

Present: Gregory Bascomb, Lois Raj, Liam Brodigan, Kathleen Anderson, Ingrid Askew, Sid Ferreira

Absent: Damon Mallory

Others: Rose Sackey-Milligan, MassHumanities

Meeting called to order by Gregory Bascomb at 7:20 pm

1. Agenda Review/Additions: Add Discussion of co-sponsoring or facilitating reading of Frederick Douglass play
2. Review of January 2014 minutes/acceptance: January 2014 minutes accepted unanimously with correction of spelling of one name.
3. Old Business
 - BHM- Deb Radway provided a review of the BHM pictures on retail windows and preview of BHM celebration planned for 2/22 on town hall steps. Damon to host event, featuring Stan Rosenberg, Ellen Story, gospel choir, spoken word.
 - Greg provided update on his planned (and subsequently snowed out) meeting with the Superintendent of Schools. Supt is planning to create an advisory group and include HRC representation. More information next month.
 - Request of Commission for Director to again distribute the Discrimination Housing Tester Training flyer
 - HRC Annual Picnic and Awards celebration scheduled for June 15 at Mill River Recreation Area. Separate event from Juneteenth celebration but HRC is supportive of that activity as well. Greg to draft letter to go to schools for solicitation of nominations. Commission agreed on total of 10 awards, including an adult award and open to groups (one award per group). Deadline for submission of nominations to be May 15, 2014. Advertise on Facebook, blog and newspapers.
 - Update on Social Media presence. HRC Facebook page is gaining momentum. Check it out Amherst Human Rights Commission. Emily, Deb and Damon have rights to post to the page. Anyone else wanting rights should tell Emily.
 - Community Engagement Discussion- DPW, LSSE, Senior Center and Fire Department Heads are agreeable to meet with HRC. Greg to solidify dates.
 - Right to Organize-Greg to represent position of HRC at Select Board and Town Meeting.

New Business

- Rose Sackey-Milligan, Program Officer at MassHumanities (taken out of order so she could be first on agenda, but reported in sequence of intended discussion). Ms. Sackey informed the HRC about the possibility of coordinating a public reading of Frederick Douglass' famous Fourth of July address, *The Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro*. A group of people take turns reading parts of the speech until they have read all of it. Where and how they do it and what they do before and after, are all up to the local event planners. We could stage a reading and collaborate with Mass Humanities to put on the event. In the past, events have drawn notable attendees like the Governor of Massachusetts, as well as many members of the general public. Douglass' speech remains provocative centuries after its initial reading. These events open up discourse on race relations and citizenship, and raise awareness of the influential role slavery continues to play in our history and national discourse. Ingrid expressed interest in organizing and directing a reading in the summer or fall of 2014.
- Fundraising Event for Fall: Greg outlined his concept of annual fundraising event for HRC, and will report back with prospective locations, menu, agenda and prices at next meeting.

- Coming Together- Advisory Group working with Russ Vernon Jones on a grant to address issues of racism in Amherst. Working on a program of public awareness and community dialogue. Would HRC like to work with this group? Sid is a member of the Advisory Committee.
- Request to purchase a Pan African Flag for the HRC.
- Carol Ross and Ingrid Askew HRC appointments expire 6/30/14, as they were both appointed to fill the unexpired terms of individuals who resigned mid-term. If they do not want to seek reappointment, they should notify the Director or Select Board office as soon as possible so there is an opportunity to notify residents of the existence of a vacancy.
- Meeting Adjourned 8:15 PM
Deborah Radway